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EPA approves the Baton Rouge Area redesignation to attainment for ozone

(BATON ROUGE) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has finalized approval of Louisiana's request to redesignate the Baton Rouge area to attainment for the 1997 8-hour ozone standard. The State has worked hard to decrease ground-level ozone in Baton Rouge which improved air quality and human health for more than 800,000 residents.

The Baton Rouge five-parish area was designated by EPA as nonattainment with the 1997 8-hour ozone standard. The redesignation will change Baton Rouge's status from nonattainment to attainment, meaning Baton Rouge will meet requirements of the ozone standard.

"Baton Rouge has shown that when the city, state, and business community work together, everyone benefits," said EPA Regional Administrator Al Armendariz. "Cleaner air is an asset for people's health, the environment, and the economy. Louisiana should be proud of this achievement."

On Aug. 31, 2010, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality submitted a redesignation request and maintenance plan to EPA. EPA proposed to approve the plan after a thorough analysis.

Preliminary air quality data for 2011 continues to show that the area meets the 1997 8-hour standard as well as the 1-hour standard for ozone. Louisiana has demonstrated that the five-parish area will be able to maintain compliance with the ozone standard for the next ten years. Current air pollution controls enable the area to maintain clean air quality. EPA will continue to work with state and local officials to ensure the area remains in compliance.

"The implications of the redesignation of the Greater Baton Rouge area to attainment are substantial," said DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch. "This will be good for business, the citizens and state and local government and will open up the area to more economic opportunities. Louisiana's environment is the best it's been since the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act were enacted. Our goal is to continue to use technology, creative measures and our regulatory authority to protect human health and the environment."

Ground-level ozone is formed when a mixture of pollutants react on warm, sunny days. The pollutants are released from cars, factories and a wide variety of other sources. Ozone can cause respiratory problems, including coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and chest pain.

The rule will be effective 30 days from the date published in Federal Register. EPA's Federal Register notices include detailed responses to all major comments on our proposed actions.